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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8877
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4205
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6597
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2008

In Today's Papers

Earthquake Warning from Kandilli Observatory
All papers give extensive coverage to the warning from Kandilli Observatory and Seismology Institute Director Gulay Altay, who stated, "There is seismic activity in the northern and southern parts of the Marmara Sea, as well as in Saros bay. The earthquake risk is still high." Mainstream Sabah quotes Altay as saying, "A five or six point magnitude earthquake will occur in Turkey. This information should be communicated to the people by the experts as clearly as possible."

Turkey - KRG Rapprochement; DTP Delegation Meets with KRG Representatives
Sabah, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Safak, Vatan and others: Liberal Radikal reports that Ankara decided to intensify its dialogue with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq. A delegation of Turkish officials headed by Turkey's special envoy to Iraq Murat Ozelcik will go to northern Iraq next week to meet with KRG President Massoud Barzani. Radikal notes that U.S. Ambassador Ross Wilson told reporters, "The U.S. has worked hard to include the Kurdish administration in the fight against PKK. In time, dialogue will intensify and will produce more visible and concrete results." Mainstream Milliyet reports that KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani told the press, "We want good relations with Turkey. We do not support PKK violence in Turkey and we do not condone the PKK's practice of launching attacks against Turkey from northern Iraq. We are not responsible for PKK attacks and we have no influence over the organization. However, we can exert efforts towards a political solution to the issue."

Meanwhile, papers report that KRG President Massoud Barzani rejected a meeting request from Turkey's DTP delegation. The delegation, led by Ahmet Turk, is in northern Iraq for meetings with Iraqi officials.

EDITORIAL OPINION: Turkey-Iraq/PKK

"General Buyukanit: There Will Be A Surprise."

Muharrem Sarikaya wrote in mainstream Sabah (5/9): "Turkish General Staff (TGS) Chief General Yasar Buyukanit recently told reporters there will be a major surprise announcement in a few days. It is clear this surprise announcement is in connection with last week's intense air operations against PKK targets in northern Iraq. It appears that, in a few days, a key PKK official might be handed over to Turkey or confirmed dead. As Buyukanit highlighted, Turkish Armed Forces have the power in the region. This winter's land operations played a large role in securing this power. After many years, the PKK's communications are cut and their leaders are no longer comfortable."

"Rapprochement With Iraqi Kurds Strengthens Domestic Peace"

Ferai Tinc wrote in mainstream Hurriyet (5/9): "The changes in Turkey's policy toward northern Iraq will contribute to domestic peace in Turkey. Turkey's decision to improve ties with the KRG and all other elements in Iraq is a comforting message for the Kurds. The troubles between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds began in the 1990s, after the PKK established itself in northern Iraq. Thus, Turkey's fight against the PKK is perceived by many as fight against the Kurds, and this creates the impression that Turkey wants to destroy the Kurds. This perception can hardly be changed without making changes in the fight against the PKK and in policies regarding the Kurdish issue. Improving ties with Iraq will have an important effect on steps to solve problems regarding internal Kurdish issues.

Radical Islamic terror organizations are trying to take advantage of the chaos in Iraq and are trying to establish themselves in northern Iraq. The threat from Islamic terrorists is going to be the new challenge for Iraq and Turkey in the years ahead. Efforts to improve ties with northern Iraq will help Turkey strengthen ties

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with Iraq and will contribute to domestic peace in Turkey."

DTP Asks for Additional Time to Prepare its Defense

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak and mainstream Sabah and Milliyet report the pro-Kurdish DTP made a second request for addition time to prepare its defense in the closure case launched against it. When the chief prosecutor submitted new evidence, including 33 folders of documents and 107 CDs and DVDs, the DTP asked the Constitutional Court for time to review the evidence.

Barroso: "Secularism Cannot Be Imposed by Force"

Sabah, Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Yeni Safak, Vatan and others: All papers report European Commission President Barroso told a meeting in Slovenia, "Turkey must be fully democratic and secular before it can become a full EU member." In addition, he noted that "secularism cannot be imposed by force."

TV Highlights

NTV

Domestic News

The parliament makes preparations to enforce smoking bans after May 19.

The Ankara prosecutor demands a five-year prison sentence for DTP deputy Aysel Tugluk, who is accused of spreading PKK propaganda.

State Minister Kursat Tuzmen attended the Turkey-Iran economic cooperation seminar in Tehran and met with Iranian President Ahmedinejad.

A police officer in Istanbul was suspended from duty for using tear gas against children celebrating soccer victory.

International News

Russia has ordered two military attaches at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to leave the country. This follows the expulsion of two Russian diplomats from Washington.

The death toll in Myanmar reaches 100,000.

Hillary Clinton rejected speculation that she will drop out of the U.S. Presidential race.

WILSON